

University of Rhode Island

DigitalCommons@URI

Open Access Master's Theses

2003

Functions of Urban Ethnic Enclaves with a Focus on South Boston's Ethnic Irish Enclave in a Historical Perspective

Emaly A. Bryson

University of Rhode Island

Follow this and additional works at: <https://digitalcommons.uri.edu/theses>

Recommended Citation

Bryson, Emaly A., "Functions of Urban Ethnic Enclaves with a Focus on South Boston's Ethnic Irish Enclave in a Historical Perspective" (2003). *Open Access Master's Theses*. Paper 1768.
<https://digitalcommons.uri.edu/theses/1768>

This Thesis is brought to you for free and open access by DigitalCommons@URI. It has been accepted for inclusion in Open Access Master's Theses by an authorized administrator of DigitalCommons@URI. For more information, please contact digitalcommons@etal.uri.edu.

E181
I6
B7
2003

FUNCTIONS OF URBAN ETHNIC ENCLAVES WITH A FOCUS ON SOUTH
BOSTON'S ETHNIC IRISH ENCLAVE IN A HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE

BY

EMALY A BRYSON

A THESIS SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS
FOR THE DEGREE OF
MASTER
IN
COMMUNITY PLANNING

UNIVERSITY OF RHODE ISLAND

2003

ABSTRACT

South Boston, Massachusetts is famous for its ethnic Irish population. From initial Irish emigration in the early 1800's, to the mass exodus during the potato famine in mid 1800's, the Irish have settled in South Boston. Initial immigrants to Boston were fleeing persecution from English land barons and hoped to find a better life in America. Yet, much of the early history of the enclave is underscored by the harsh treatment of the ruling Brahmin class. The Irish struggled to find jobs, housing and practice their Catholic faith within the confines of an elite Protestant majority. Slowly enclave residents broke through the obstacles and started to create a dynamic ethnic neighborhood. The enclave continued to change and used politics as a vehicle for advancement. Irish politicians and the 'ethnic vote' were critical in battling against movements of redevelopment and desegregation that threatened the homogeneity of enclave. The neighborhood is constantly changing, yet remains rooted in the socio-cultural norms of the Celtic customs. Traditions of Catholic faith, pub culture and a code of secrecy endure in the area and must be understood as part of the equation of ethnic enclave.

Ethnic enclave functions such as providing a sense of security, defense, social support, socio-economic assistance and cultural preservation are working processes of the enclave (Boal, 1976; Peach, 1996). Yet, in the literature these functions are static and categorized, rather applied within the context of historical, dynamic characteristics that change over time. The functions of the South Boston

Irish enclave have changed to reflect socio-economic events that occurred during the past two hundred years. Functions are a reaction to the atmosphere in which the enclave evolves. Functions cannot be viewed as action separate from the history and culture of an enclave. Defense, avoidance, and attack are reactions to the negative atmosphere immigrants encountered and the need to advance in a dominant host community. Preservation and sociological functions are employed to ensure that the customs and culture are not lost during the evolution of enclave within the dominance of the host community. The Irish enclave of South Boston's functions are a reaction to the social history in which it evolved and the culture of its residents.

AKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Thank you to my family who came up with great ideas and leads on where to procure more information about our Irish heritage and Celtic culture. John (Billy) McGee, thank you for the street level information about your adventures in South Boston and helping me understand the neighborhood sociology. Professor Carroll, thank you for your insight into Irish Catholic culture and information about your Irish Catholic relations both in and out of South Boston. Thank you to Professor Feldman, Professor Foster and Professor Newman for your guidance and academic advice. Thank you Marmy and Da for being there through this whole process and being a constant source of information and inspiration.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT

AKNOWLEDGEMENTS

iv

TABLE OF CONTENTS

v - vi

LIST OF TABLES

vii

LIST OF FIGURES

viii

Chapter I – INTRODUCTION

Page 1

1. Thesis research

Page 4

Chapter II – ENCLAVES

Page 6

1. Definition and images of enclaves

Page 8

2. Functions of enclaves

Page 10

Chapter III – HISTORY OF THE ENCLAVE

Page 15

1. Forces of emigration out of Ireland

Page 17

2. Growth of South Boston community

Page 19

3. Maintaining the enclave

Page 27

CHAPTER IV – CULTURE OF THE ENCLAVE

Page 37

1. Religion

Page 39

2. Drinking

Page 41

3. Social customs and nuances

Page 43

CHAPTER V – WHY FUNCTIONS SHOULD BE VIEWED HISTORICALLY

Page 49

1. Functions as part of historical events

Page 49

CHAPTER VI – CONCLUSION

Page 54

APPENDICES

APPENDIX A – Consent Form Page 57

APPENDIX B – Glossary of Terms Page 59

BIBLIOGRAPHY Page 61

LIST OF TABLES

Table A: Function matrix	Page 10
Table B: Irish heritage statistics	Page 21
Table C: Timeline of Irish in South Boston	Page 35
Table D: Facts about Irish in Massachusetts	Page 47
Table E: South Boston race and ancestry information	Page 47

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure A: A Catholic church in South Boston flies both the American and Irish flags	Page 5
Figure B: Area map of South Boston	Page 17
Figure C: Irish Famine Memorial in Boston, Massachusetts	Page 19
Figure D: View of dock area of Castle Island today looking into downtown Boston. Many Irish worked at the docks upon immigration from Ireland	Page 22
Figure E: Anti-Irish Employment Advertisement	Page 24
Figure F: The Irish Counties	Page 26
Figure G: St. Augustine's Church	Page 40
Figure H: Local Irish bars are still places of gathering	Page 42
Figure I: Residential streets are still lined by three-deckers	Page 45
Figure J: Plaque at the Irish Famine Memorial in Boston, Massachusetts	Page 48

CHAPTER I – INTRODUCTION

Boston, “the Irish capital of America” (Forry 2001, 1), reflects its Irish heritage in many ways, including the city’s professional basketball team logo, museums, monuments, social clubs, bars and its portrayal in films such as *Good Will Hunting*, *Southie* and *The Boondock Saints*. For more than 150 years the Irish have settled in Boston, concentrating their residency on the peninsula of South Boston. By definition, an enclave is spatially concentrated area that is self-defined and enhances the development for its residents. The peninsula of South Boston has become an ethnic Irish enclave, with the first emigrants leaving English land oppression during Cromwellian invasions, to the mass exodus during the potato famine in mid 1800’s, and the continued generations of Irish who live there today. Three defining events in the South Boston’s history are initial immigration to Boston during the 1800’s, the 1900’s Irish rise to political power through ethnic voting and the desegregation bussing protests of the 1970’s and 1980’s. These and other historical events had an impact on changes in the enclave and its functions.

This thesis is based on the notion that the functions of an enclave change in reaction to of events and must be analyzed in the context of the culture and history of the enclave. Existing literature on enclaves thoroughly comprehends the functions of enclaves, but it does not fully recognize that enclave functions are heavily influenced by historical events involving the enclave and its residents. Ethnic enclaves cannot be disconnected from their geography and ancestry. The

geography of the Irish enclave in South Boston created clear topographical lines by being located on a peninsula.

Functions such as providing a sense of security, defense, advancement and cultural preservation are working processes of an enclave (Boal 1976; Peach 1996). Such functions are both positive and negative features and change with the development of the enclave. Boal identifies four initial functions: defense, avoidance, attack and preservation. Defensive functions physically define the enclave, provide a level of safety in the cluster of homogenous persons, and create a social and physical barrier. Another layer of defense is avoidance by congregating in an area to create an internal support network and reduce contact with the host community. The enclave becomes a place where there is immediate acceptance upon immigration and a built-in safety net of understanding. The avoidance function is re-enforced by chain migration, in which immigrants learn of the opportunities prior to emigrating, and is further advanced by the 'stay with your own kind' mentality of the enclave. The attack function allows the enclave to change and influence the host community. The enclave is an existing place of organization and a ready-made environment for election of local representatives. The preservation function is an action to confront external pressures and internal maintenance. By isolating themselves, the residents nourish their ancestral norms by being among those of similar beliefs and customs (Boal 1976).

Functions also relate to the sociology of an enclave, including a sense of community that the group develops, relationships based on ethnicity and internal and external pressures that the residents experience together (Peach 1996). Enclaves are a place where cultural norms are celebrated, and there is automatic, family-like acceptance of incoming immigrants (Peach 1996). The socially constructed walls of the enclave protect against host attack, and social processes become the 'glue' of the ethnic community (Peach 1996). Internal enclave social networks promote the preservation of culture in opposition to the norms and values of mainstream society. This sense of community and internal focus is not always a result of preservationist intentions. External forces, such as overt and covert segregation, racist attitudes and biased practices in employment, education and housing pressure immigrants and ethnic residents to retreat to places where their heritage and culture are valued. Functions can be a result of the host community's negative image of the enclave and a forced restriction rather than self-imposed, internal preservation.

The history of South Boston is marked by three major events that influenced the functions of the enclave: immigration in the early to mid 1800's, rise to political power in the 1900's and the protests of desegregation busing from the late 1960s to the 1980's. These events were related to dramatic shifts in functions and are examples of how functions should be viewed historically. For example, upon emigration from Ireland, Irish immigrants endured a bigoted, caste like social system in Brahmin ruled Boston. They experienced a harsh, anti-

immigrant, more specifically anti-Irish, environment. The Irish had left Ireland because of poverty and oppression by the English, yet experienced similar treatment here in Boston. The defensive functions responded to the needs for safety and security against the repression of bigoted hiring practices, anti-Catholic sentiments and the need for the Irish immigrants to create a haven for survival.

1. Thesis research

This thesis will discuss the history of the ethnic Irish enclave of South Boston as it relates to the changing functions of enclaves. The research explains what an ethnic enclave is, studies one enclave, and argues that enclave functions should be viewed historically as part of reactions to major events. The research is limited in scope, focuses on the key events of the evolution of the enclave, and analyzes major themes associated with functions. The history is geographically and socially focused on the enclave. This thesis draws heavily from the books authored by O'Connor (1988,1995) because they provide the best internal history of the neighborhood and understanding of its cultural nuances. This history of the enclave is augmented through interviews with informants to gain background knowledge of the enclave. These informants were helpful in obtaining a deeper sense of Celtic culture and were chosen for their street-level knowledge of the enclave and experiences with the Catholic faith. There are only three informants because it is difficult to infiltrate the enclave and gain the trust of residents and informants with the culturally sensitive issues that are entwined in the enclave. When studying enclaves, it is important to recognize that one is looking in from

the outside and that information should be tailored to gain knowledge from both sides of the enclave walls.



Figure A: A Catholic church in South Boston flies both the American and Irish flags.

CHAPTER II – ENCLAVES

The first step in understanding the change of functions in an ethnic neighborhoods is to define what is an ‘ethnic enclave’. Enclaves are spatially concentrated areas of peoples of similar ancestry bound together for mutual social, economic or political benefit. Enclaves grow and evolve through immigration, unity of custom, and social, economic and physical benefits the residents receive from living with people of common culture. The peninsula of South Boston became a haven for Irish after initial immigrants settled it in the early 1800’s. The enclave performed several functions, the importance of which changed during the neighborhood evolution. These changes were influenced by historical and social events that occurred during the development of the enclave. Functions such as providing a sense of security, defense, social support and cultural preservation are working functions in the enclave that fluctuate according to the historical conditions (Boal 1976; Peach 1996). Enclaves are unique because of the residents who live their, their culture and the events that occur during the evolution of the enclave.

Initial defensive functions helped the enclave battle against the majority and were the base of forming an ethnic neighborhood. Boston Irish immigrants faced a harsh environment with the Know-Nothing political party and anti-immigrant hiring practices. The peninsula became a protective place where new Irish Catholic immigrants could be welcomed and their customs continued in the shadow of a Protestant majority. The homogeneity of an enclave provided a level

of safety and comfort that was welcoming to residents and promoted chain migration. The ethno-centric and sociological function of preservation promoted cultural norms and strengthened the ethnocentric glue that kept the community internally focused. The avoidance function encouraged the internal focus of the enclave and created a niche so that immigrants did not have to interact with the dominant culture. The 'stay with your own kind' mentality of avoidance developed social and economic networks. These functions do not always produce a positive outcome and can be a deterrent to assimilation and acceptance into the host community. The functions and internally focused sociology of the enclave can restrict change and alienate residents who do not fit into the majority of the enclave.

Functions must be understood as part of a physical and social history of the enclave. Initially the enclave battled against anti-immigrant sentiment by creating defensive walls and rooting the enclave in the peninsula to make a safe neighborhood for Irish immigrants. The Irish Catholics were alienated in the Protestant majority city and avoided contact with the Protestant majority by developing social and economic niches in the enclave. When the social environment changed in the post-Civil War era, the fact that the enclave's culture was not lost in advancement implies that the enclave changed. As the external environment of the host community changed, the enclave was again under attack. The defensive walls returned to battle against changing the homogeneity of the enclave. The enclave used defense and preservation to ensure its continuation, and

these functions evolved along with the changes that occur internally and externally of the enclave.

1. Definition and images of enclaves

By definition, an enclave is

a spatially concentrated area in which members of a particular population group, self-defined by ethnicity or religion or otherwise, congregate as a means of enhancing their economic, social and political and/or cultural development (Marcuse 1997, 236).

The peninsula of South Boston is concentrated with Irish immigrants and generations of ancestral Irish peoples. The geography of the enclave, situated on a peninsula could have been helpful its the preservation and security because it was naturally buffered and defined by landscape. The residents identified the area as their own by building Catholic churches, Irish pubs and defining the area to be a safe neighborhood against Protestant Brahmin rule. The peninsula would help immigrants find employment and housing and was a launching area for Irish political candidates. In addition, the densely populated ethnic area allowed the Irish to continue to follow their ethnic cultural norms in a protected area and create an enclave that enhanced the Irish experience in Boston.

The peninsula of South Boston, Massachusetts became concentrated with Irish after the initial immigrants of the early 1800's settled.

Urban ethnic areas usually emerge through the process of migration and settlement. After a few people establish an initial enclave, the area becomes a neighborhood and later migrants from the same ethnic background settle nearby (Sze-Onn 1996, 13).

The area became a haven for 'black forties' (during the potato rot of the 1840's) refugees and provided social, religious and physical support for residents. For a place to be a magnet for immigrants, the area does not have to be dominated 100 percent by a single ethnicity or even be the majority group of the area. If the group has sizeable numbers in an area, and the residents have established cultural features such as stores and religious institutions, the area has an image of being dominated by a group that invites other group members (Abrahamson 1996). Sometimes immigrants chose an area initially because it was close to their places of employment. For example, many Irishmen found work on the docks, and their residential location on the peninsula suited them well (Abrahamson 1996). After the initial foundation of the neighborhood, emigrants will have pre-departure knowledge of the area.

Part of the definition of an enclave is its image among the host community. External relations exist between enclave residents and host community residents in how they view the enclave. The image of an enclave can be a positive or negative connotation associated with the enclave. Sources of the image can be found in elements of racism, segregation and elitism in a ghetto or in an enclave that acts as a positive safe haven of growth and cultural celebration in an enclave (Marcuse 1997). The ethnic neighborhood can have a negative image among the host community and itself, leading to a self-fulfilling prophecy of misery (van Kempen 1998). This image can also lead to a level of ignorance about the enclave that is acted out in the media, employment practices, and hearsay, continuing intolerance

and fear of the ethnic group. Segregation of ethnic groups can foster concentrations of poverty, become a voluntary ghetto and continue the cycle of limited social interaction with relevant individuals and institutions (van Kempen 1998). In contrast, enclaves can be positive places where immigrants gain acceptance and establish social networks that are unique and culturally sensitive to the enclave. The social exclusion of the host community and segregation of the ethnic enclave can cause isolation from mainstream society but strengthen the bonds among members of the ethnic group (van Kempen 1998).

2. Functions of enclaves

<u>Function</u>	<u>Author</u>	<u>Description</u>
Defense	Boal	Physically define the area and provides a level of safety against the host community. Seen through both physical actions and sociology of enclave
Avoidance	Boal	Emphasizes internal supports, networks and safety. Seen in the 'stay with your own kind' clan mentality.
Attack	Boal	Proactive attempts to support policies and politics that benefit the enclave and citizens.
Preservation	Boal Peach	Social actions that are part of the 'glue' of the enclave and accentuate common cultural bonds.

Table A: Function matrix

Functions of enclaves have been initially understood as actions associated with needs but unattached to an enclave, its ethnicity and history. Functions are acted out by the enclave as part of its sociology formed through its the ethnic

history. Defensive functions physically define an enclave, provide a level of safety in the cluster of homogenous persons, and create a social and physical barrier. Defensive functions can be seen in actions such as marking 'turf', tagging and the physical 'gang' like protection of a concentration of common peoples (Peach 1996). Such defensive functions respond to the need to create and define an identity within the host community. This clustering of peoples fulfills a physical defensive function and reduces their individual isolation among a dominant host community. In addition, the defensive function supports the ethnic residents' claim to the physical area. The physical security and defense of the area is heightened with the intense homogeneity of residents. Persons feel more comfortable and secure among those with similar characteristics, values and norms. The defensive function provides internal safety, marks a clear line against the majority and is acted out during battles or threats to the enclave.

Another layer of the defensive function is the avoidance function in which the residents use the enclave as a haven and emphasize the internal supportive actions of the enclave (Boal 1976). The combination of these functions is a product created by the needs of immigrants for a place where there is immediate acceptance upon immigration without having awkward interaction with the host community. The layering of these functions promotes enclosure and the common tendency among immigrants to 'stay with their own kind' for safety, commonality and acceptance. The development of an internal social and economic network supports the enclave and allows avoidance to continue. Avoidance of external

relationships produces economic and social niches among enclave members. These niches construct a place for ethnic advancement that may not be available in the dominant community (Boal 1976). Defense and avoidance combine to create an external wall for the enclave as well as internal cohesion as defenses against the majority.

Along with creating a safe environment for immigrants and internal cohesion an enclave has a need to advance within the host community structure and break through obstacles to survive. Using the enclave, as a base residents can to advance causes for which the enclave was in favor. This is the enclave's attack function. Concentration of a homogeneous group in an enclave enables it to launch an attack politically and allows residents to battle policies that persecute them. Urban enclaves also provide a base for urban insurrections and uprisings. The areas are safe havens for protesting, where protestors can gain support, and where support turns to silence in harboring leaders of protest. The attack function is possible because of the intense connection and commonality of the residents and the ability to launch a powerful movement with one voice, unlike a host community that may be split by many interests (Boal 1976).

"Social" functions refer to a sense of community that the group develops, relationships based on ethnicity and geography, along with internal and external pressures that the residents experience together (Peach 1996). The preservation function is a mechanism of cultural promotion and celebration (Boal 1976). There

is a need for an enclave to preserve cultural customs or risk losing its identity to the majority culture. Maintaining a high level of ethnic culture and protecting their values, residents create a place where they can nourish these norms by being among those of similar beliefs. By living in close vicinity, the ethnic residents create a base for the continuation and acceptance of customs. Enclaves are a place where ethnic culture is celebrated and there is automatic, family-like acceptance of incoming immigrants (Peach 1996). The socially constructed walls of the enclave protect against host attack and internal socio-cultural processes become the 'glue' of the ethnic community (Peach 1996). Internal social networks promote preservation of a culture against the norms and values of mainstream society. The function of celebration or preservation of heritage can be seen in the persistence of shops, clubs and religious institutions (van Kempen 1998). Social networks form for both cultural understanding and economic benefit. The concentration of an ethnic enclave made it easier to maintain social and economic connections. The enclave's residents may not intentionally enact this function. Instead, they create it by living, working and socializing with similar people in an ethnic enclave that is internally focused by avoidance and defense functions. The Irish were not immediately accepted by the Protestant host community, and had few options other than to socialize among themselves.

Promoting the preservation function are internal pressures including an ethnocentric view of the enclave's heritage, desire to maintain cultural norms and native languages against to the dominant culture. Enclaves resist total integration

and fear of losing or betraying their culture. External forces, such as overt and covert segregation, racist attitudes and biased practices in employment, education and housing opportunities pressure immigrants and ethnic residents to return to places where their heritage and culture are valued. In addition, there occurs a type of internal imposed separation occurs when residents of both the ethnic neighborhood and other neighborhoods want to secure segregation and to discourage encroachment of 'others' (Abrahamson 1996). This imposed segregation can block steps towards assimilation and acceptance into the majority community. An ethnocentric focus can cause resistance and external negative sentiment by the host community because the immigrants built more barriers to integration.

CHAPTER III- HISTORY OF THE ENCLAVE

The history of the Irish, more specifically the history of the Irish in South Boston, is important to understanding the causes of change in the enclave's functions. The history of the Irish in Boston begins with events in native Ireland that forced peasants off the lands and caused them to flee to urban areas in England and America. Rising land rents and later a potato rot destroyed the agricultural way of life in Ireland, sending the ships of emigrants in the 'black forties' (1840's) onto the shores of Boston. The immigrants faced harsh social and economic conditions in their new homeland. Many of the immigrants sought work along the docks of South Boston, but many endured poverty through anti-immigrant hiring practices and were disgraced by the Brahmin society.

Over time, the Irish of South Boston gained a stronger stance in Boston, through openings in employment, and generated a community on the peninsula of South Boston. By the late 1800's, the Irish began to secure their position on the peninsula by building Catholic churches, celebrating their culture and creating a place where they felt safe in community. South Boston grew as a neighborhood and needed a way to continue to gain power in a city where classic Brahmin society dictated the policy. Politics was an avenue that was available to the Irish, and Irish candidates slowly began gaining seats in local administration. From the early 1900's, the enclave provided a solid base of voters, and candidates used an "ethnic vote" to rise in government. These new positions allowed South Boston to battle against policies and politics in the city that threatened the community.

During the 1960's and 1970's, South Boston struggled to maintain its character against the changing demographics of the city of Boston. Boston's Afro-American population was growing and in the homogeneous enclave of South Boston, encroachment brought about racial tensions. These tensions came to a boiling point when the court ordered desegregation of schools. Residents and South Boston politicians battled against busing of students.

The busing conflict was eased with the installation of the first Afro-American school superintendent, Dr. Laval Wilson in 1985 and the election of Mayor Ray Flynn, a hometown Southie boy. Mayor Flynn promoted positive developments throughout the city, but always remembered his roots. Mayor Flynn stepped down in 1993 to become the Vatican ambassador, and the first Italian-American mayor Thomas Menino took office. Today, the Mayor governs a diverse city that is a product of the immigrants that constantly pass through its port.

Explaining the history of the South Boston is essential to understanding the evolution of the enclave's functions. External and internal events are part of change in the enclave and cause the functions of enclaves to shift in reaction. Sociological change expressed and experienced by residents influenced their behavior and how the enclave evolved. Focusing specifically on the history of South Boston allowed the researched to gain a better internal perspective of how city and enclave historical events co-insided with changes in functions. The history

was procured mainly from two books that provided a street level historical analysis and were culturally aware of the enclave's reactions to events.

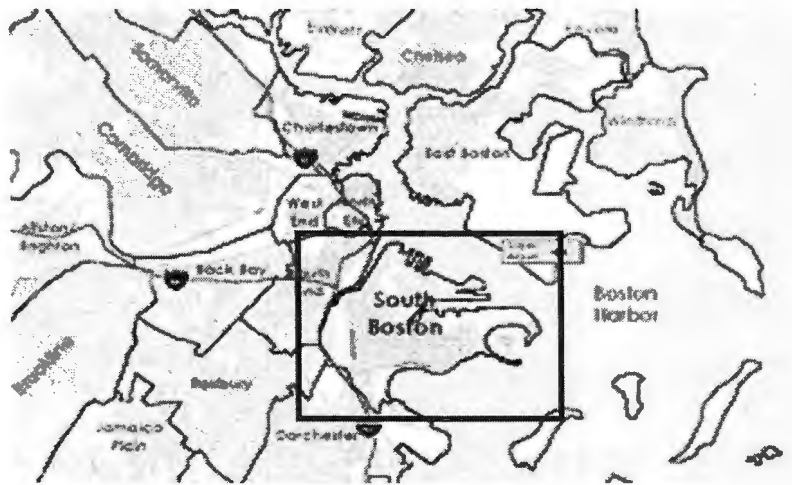


Figure B: Area map of South Boston (Map of Boston, 2003)

1. Forces of emigration out of Ireland

Changing economic and social conditions in Europe heavily influenced emigration to America. In Ireland, Cromwellian invasions triggered a change in land tenure. From the 1660's there was a reduction of native Irish ownership of land, increased foreign landlords and the implementation of anti-Catholic penal laws, which further reduced native Irish ability to own and retain family land (Handlin 1941). The Irish were forced to become paying tenants on their former lands, while ruling English landlords inflated rents. The Irish tenants could not produce enough to sustain their native agriculturally based livelihood and feed their families on small plots of high-rent lands. The Irish were demoralized and lacked employment opportunities, forcing them into poverty that affected more

than fourth-fifths of Irish families (Handlin 1941). Irish agriculture and society suffered with the rise in land rents, while increasing population hampered any efforts to rise above already existing shortages of food and farmable land (Handlin 1941). Escaping the repression, farmers fled towards urban opportunities in England and America, while those who remained continued to suffer from famine, poverty and increased eviction.

The 1845 potato rot brought complete chaos to Ireland and the tide of emigration swelled from those fleeing suffering and hunger. From 1835 to 1865 'the stream of emigration' continued, little affected by conditions in America. Though it fell on somewhat in the late fifties, new landlord troubles in the sixties and the reappearance of the potato rot in 1863 stimulated it again. The movement was cumulative in effect. Those who left early did so with the intention of eventually sending for their families, relatives, and friends. Soon sums of money streamed back to Ireland to aid others across, by the sale of pre paid tickets to Boston. Meanwhile, even those only indirectly affected by the upheaval were drawn into the current of migration. Doctors, lawyers, trades people, and artisans moved from deserted villages where they could no longer find a livelihood. To these were added many Irish, who, after first emigrating to England or Scotland, decided to go to America. Not until late in 1864 did any real slackening in the tide occur. By that time, some 2,500,000 Irishmen had abandoned their homes (Handlin 1941, 52).

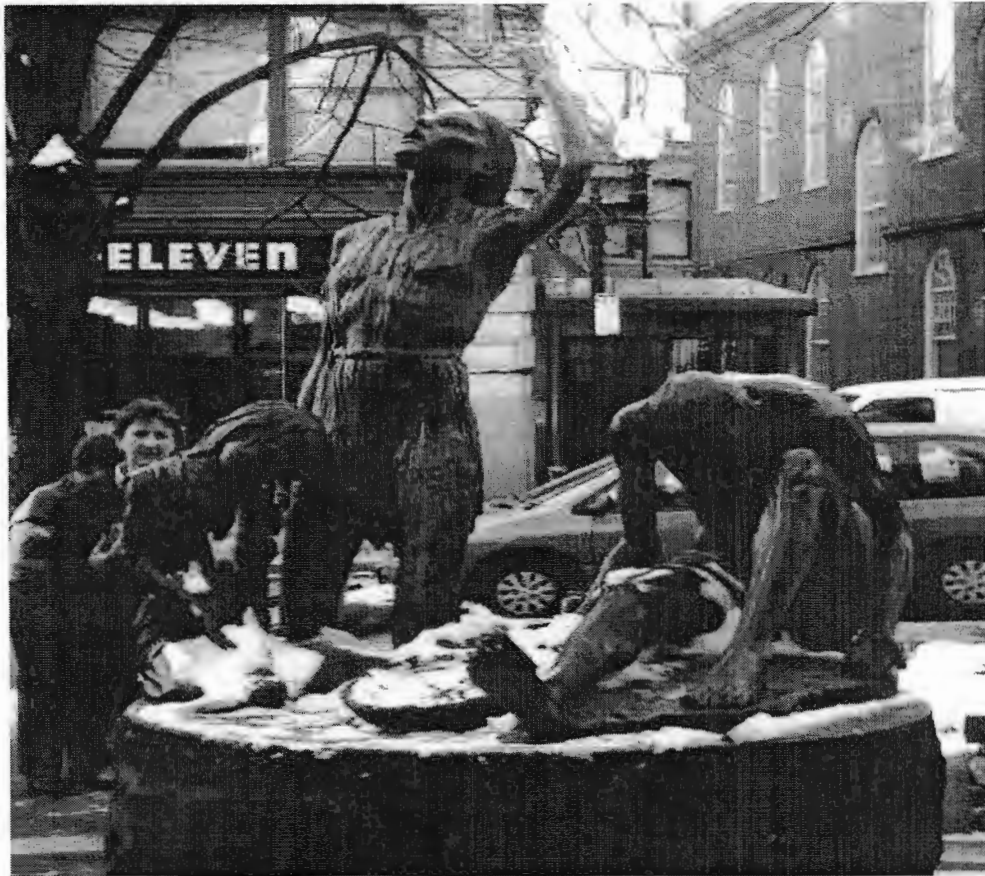


Figure C: Irish Famine Memorial in Boston, Massachusetts

2. Growth of South Boston community

The continuing exodus out of Ireland filled the streets of American port cities. Boston was growing, the revolution was over and Boston's population was rebounding from its decline during the revolution. The undeveloped peninsula of South Boston was ripe for expansion, and Old Dorchester Neck became annexed into the Town of Boston on March 6, 1804 (O'Connor 1988). To attract new development and to create better access for rising land values on the 600-acre peninsula, a toll bridge was built from the south end of Boston to the western end of South Boston. This bridge was inconvenient for travelers who wanted better

access to the center of town, and there was a cry for a more central gateway. Another bridge project was blocked by protest from the Front Street Corporation, but after 20 years of litigation, a charter was granted for the production of the North Free Bridge in 1826. Street grids, planning and development flourished with this new access point. The peninsula was originally intended for an upper class escape from central city congestion, but with shipping and industry in the area, they found alternatives and the immigrants moved in to be close to their employers. By the 1830's, there was easy access to the peninsula and the Irish began to move there in increasing numbers (O'Connor 1988).

Boston had attracted a large number of immigrants in the first half of the nineteenth century, the Irish in particular. By 1855 it was estimated that one of every three people living in the city were foreign-born Irish (50,000 of a population of 160,000). It was so Irish that one Bostonian described the city as "the Dublin of America" (Dolan 1997, 1). Immigrants came from all over the Emerald Isle to fill the streets and tenements of Boston. Until 1835 most of the population came from Northern Ireland (mostly Ulster and Tyrone County), but later immigrants came from Cork, Kerry, Galway and Clare in the Southern portion of Ireland. These immigrants were some of the poorest peasants crossing the Atlantic, and "from this group, above all, Boston got her immigrant population" (Handlin 1941, 55). From 1825 to 1830, upwards of 125,000 people emigrated from Ireland to the United States. Over 30,000 of those came into Massachusetts alone. By 1830, the Irish-Catholic population had swollen to over 8,000, double the number of 1825 (O'Connor 1988). By February 1847 an

uncontrollable flood of immigrants, mainly from Southern Ireland was washing ashore in Boston Harbor. The coffin ships of the ‘black forties’ brought famine victims escape from the potato rot. They landed poor, and had no money or skills to move out of Boston.

In 1847, the city of Boston, which had been absorbing immigrants at the rate of about four to five thousand a year, was inundated by over thirty-seven thousand new arrivals (O’Connor 1988, 48).

Malnourished and under-skilled a harsh reality of unemployment and poverty hit the enclave.

Jobs were hard to find. Employers often advertised their unwillingness to take on the newcomers by hanging out ‘No Irish Need Apply’ signs. Irish women did find work as domestics, stereotyped as ‘Biddies,’ short for Bridget. Irish men also became servants or took unskilled jobs in construction. *Harper's Weekly*, the most popular magazine of the day, routinely ran cartoons lampooning Bridget and Patrick. The overt hostility these cartoons convey is a measure of how unwelcome the Irish were (Irish Immigration 2003, 1).

South Boston Population by Year					
<u>1840</u>	<u>1845</u>	<u>1850</u>	<u>1855</u>	<u>1860</u>	<u>1865</u>
1,445	5,018	9,526	15,433	18,356	20,572
Irish Passengers Entering Boston by Sea					
<u>1841</u>	<u>1845</u>	<u>1851</u>	<u>1856</u>	<u>1861</u>	
10,157	65,556	63,831	22,681	6,973	

Table B: Irish heritage statistics (Handlin 1941)

In the midst of trying to gain employment and make a way for their families, the Irish community needed a place to call home. With little money, few skills and no prospects of meaningful labor, most of the newcomers moved in with

friends and relatives in congested districts along Boston's waterfront, close to the docks and wharves, the shops and markets, the counting houses and stores, and the workshops and stables where unskilled men found occasional work and extra scraps of food. The growing mass of unemployed Irish Catholics immigrants were viewed with growing resentment, and the Irish became labeled as lazy paupers and vicious criminals who were lowering the 'moral standards' of the entire city (O'Connor 1988). Roving gangs began hassling Irish sections of town, and relations between the immigrants and host community were strained. Unemployed and living in poverty, many Irish noticed the potential of the South Boston peninsula because there were residences close to work, the comfort of clan and protection against the harsh climate of the host community. The enclave was beginning to form. There was a thick chain of migration that was ever increasing the strength, density and Irish culture that created a tight knit community. Immigrants wanted a place to call their own and South Boston was a magnet for the new immigrants because of job opportunities and the sense of comfort the ethnic neighborhood provided (O'Connor 1988).



Figure D: View of the dock area of Castle Island today looking into downtown Boston. Many Irish worked at the docks upon immigration from Ireland.

The peninsula community was growing in the shadow of negative sentiment about immigrants. With propaganda fueled by the anti-immigrant Know Nothing Party, the contempt of many native Bostonians for immigrants grew. This anti-immigrant movement created many obstacles for the Irish-Catholics, including discouraged use of political rights, risk of increased legislation to restrict citizenship, restrictions on Catholic clergy to perform duties in public institutions such as hospitals, poorhouses and simple tasks such as comforting the dying. Churches were defiled, children forced to read Protestant bibles in school, and religious ceremonies were besieged by regulations and inspections (O'Connor 1988). The Irish community battled against Brahmins who did not want to lose the Anglo-Saxon Protestant character of the city. Boston was an old city with an established hierarchy, and the new wave of immigrants could topple the recognized order of society. Anti-Irish employment ads were seen in newspapers, and the Irish were stereotyped as drunks, dirty immigrants and heathens with their Catholic faith. Irish immigrants were arriving, hoping to escape persecution and poverty, but they found much of the same in the United States that they did from the English in Ireland. The growing enclave struggled to carve out a place in the host community and endure the socio-economic obstacles that the host community had in put in place.

WANTED—A good, reliable woman to take the care of a boy two years old, in a small family in Brookline. Good wages and a permanent situation given. No washing or ironing will be required, but good recommendations as to character and capacity demanded. Postively no Irish need apply. Call at 224 Washington street, corner of Summer street.
6t iy 28

Figure E: Anti- Irish Employment Advertisement (O'Connor 1995, 69)

The onset of the Civil War helped to create employment opportunities on the peninsula. New war technology and demand for supplies put factories into high production mode. Factories were forced to hire immigrants to keep up with demand, and the Irish took advantage of the opening door of employment. South Boston Iron Works, City Point Works and Globe Works Company worked twenty-four hour shifts to keep up with orders, and local peninsula residents filled the new positions at the factories. The prosperity caused by the Civil War was a small step for the Irish community in advancing itself economically and socially. Employment opportunities had opened up, the Irish had been heralded for their contribution to the war efforts as competent soldiers, and a more tolerant attitude prevailed (O'Connor 1995). In this light, the community began to flourish.

The war has taken a rather amorphous and undistinguished peninsula of land and transformed into a unique Irish-Catholic neighborhood that would shortly become one of the most colorful districts surrounding the central city (O'Connor 1988, 63).

Brahmin society still controlled much of the wealth and property in Boston, but its Protestant influence was withering in the rise of Catholic Church steeples and Irish demographics in South Boston. By 1880, there were nearly 65,000 people of Irish

ethnicity living in Boston, nearly doubling the numbers of 30 years before (O'Connor 1988). With the Civil War over, heavy industry moved south, making way for more residential districts, but the door of employment was now more open to Irish immigrants. Male residents now found work unloading freighters and in local stables, while the women walked across the bridge to scrub floors. Growing public utility companies supplied work, and with advances in transportation, community residents could search out employment off the peninsula. These new jobs in public utilities and municipal services were not already filled by 'native' Bostonians and were readily available to immigrants. The Irish started as simple laborers, ditch diggers, hog-carriers and maintenance men, but these jobs were stepping-stones into growing acceptance for the next generation. These simple jobs put the Irish immigrants onto the lowest rungs of a socio-economic ladder. Over time with advances made with the ethnic voting machine, the Irish climbed into higher employment options.

Boston was continuing to grow, and the faces of immigrants were changing to Eastern Europeans and Russians looking for opportunities. The Poles moved in along the borders of South Boston and with their Catholic religion would become a small but active community on the peninsula. These new immigrants had a tough time penetrating the established 'walls' of the Irish peninsula. Even within the enclave, there were 'cliques' formed of those who were from different Irish counties. People from Galway lived around A and B Street, and those from Cork gathered around D Street (O'Connor 1988), but some of this broke down as the

presence of other immigrants arrived on the main throughways along the peninsula. South Boston was changing with the times, but still clung fast to the traditions and rituals of Irish Catholic culture. The enclave would not soon forget the treatment Irish Catholics suffered under Brahmin rules. These memories would continue to cause friction between the enclave and host community.

Catholic children in the Irish neighborhoods would be reared to the catechisms of hate that instructed them never to forget the bigotry of Protestants, who confined them to institutions and asylums, and the cruelty of Brahmins, who had posted on factory that proclaimed for all to see: 'No Irish Need Apply'. The bitter antagonisms of the 1840's and 1850's created a wall of separation that would continue to keep the two communities at arm's length until well in to the second half of the twentieth century (O'Connor 1995, 94).



Figure F: The Irish Counties (Map of Irish Counties, 2003)

3. Maintaining the enclave

The enclave took shape in the post-Civil War era as it slowly climbed the rungs of Brahmin society. An increase in more ‘foreign’ immigrants arriving in the United States from Eastern Europe and Russia, took the focus off the Irish since they were no longer the newest immigrant group to want a chance in America. These Eastern European and Russian immigrants were vastly more different from the immigrants of Western Europe, specifically the Irish. They did not speak English, and their religious practices were more unfamiliar than the Roman Catholic or Protestant religions of Western Europe. These new immigrant groups replaced the Irish on the bottom rungs of Boston’s established hierarchy. The Irish were beginning to achieve a small level of acceptance. World War I brought another wartime economic boom and brought the Irish more employment in factories. If the Irish were to continue their advancement, they would need to gain leverage and power that they were denied both in Ireland and originally in the United States. Politics became an avenue for advancement. Irish politicians seized the opportunity for “ethnic voting” in the densely populated peninsula. Ward politicians ruled their constituency with both fear and respect (O’Connor 1988).

The new “bosses” promoted the vote of “their own people” and in turn would repay the favor with such basics as food, clothing and shelter.

Irish politicians and much of the ethnic community aligned themselves with the Democratic Party but ran under two separate strategies. One strategy was based on tradition, following the existing basic structure of the host society

government to sustain law and order for the community. The second platform was “ethnic politics”. This political strategy was based on the pillars of Irish culture, gaining votes through friends and family rather than straight-laced political achievement (O’Connor 1988). South Boston residents began voting with their heritage and hearts, putting local candidates into office. Struggling to climb the political ladder, the Irish ethnic vote would have its first success in 1884. Hugh O’Brien was elected Mayor, followed by the election of Patrick Collins (O’Connor 1988). Political clubs, formed to search out and promote Irish political talent, sprung up on the peninsula, and this grassroots campaigning came to a head in 1905, when the first United States born Irish Catholic mayor, John F. Fitzgerald was elected. The election of Fitzgerald was the beginning of a legacy of Irish politicians who used the ethnic vote, their relationship with the South Boston neighborhood, and the continued commitment to the Democratic Party as a political platform.

As the enclave grew, it deepened its affiliation with Celtic culture and developed a growing political constituency. The Irish had carved out a way of life in South Boston; there were clear lines of ethnicity.

More than ever, separateness became an unwritten law in South Boston. Young and old held firmly to the conviction as an unusually friendly, orderly and tolerant community as long as ‘outsiders’ stayed away and local people stayed with their own kind. At work in political affairs, and in communities activities, they were all expected to meet together, associate on an equal and democratic basis, and work together for the common good (O’Connor 1988, 174).

Gangs of youths claimed their 'territory' and united under common culture, and the neighborhood was united towards the future under two banners, the red, white, blue, and the tri-color. The culture of the community was rooted in the past of fighting against the tyranny of authority, from the fields of Ireland to the Brahmins of Boston.

Post World War II changed the landscape of the peninsula. There was a boom in public housing projects along the fringes of the enclave. Originally, these new residences or projects (The Old Harbor and Old Colony) were filled with older Irish Catholics, but the projects deteriorated over time and new residents of different races and religions moved into housing projects (O'Connor 1988). The faces and the culture of residents on the fringe of the Irish community were different from the homogenous, white Catholics who were their neighbors. With losses for Irish candidates in the mayoral elections, the enclave became more susceptible to host community control and the pressures of changing ethnicity of immigrants. The 1950's also saw a change in the politics and policy of the city of Boston. No longer could politicians and governments on depend the ethnic voting. Boston was now home to second and third generation residents who wanted less to do with 'the old country' and more to do with the growth of Boston as a city (O'Connor 1995).

This intense political and cultural relationship within the context of the enclave is not always a positive feature for those living within the confines of a

homogenous neighborhood. Diversity and new ideas were easily suppressed in this concentrated area. The resistance to change could be narrow minded at times and allowed only one path for residents to follow. Ethnic voting and traditionalism deterred those who did not align themselves with the dominant philosophy of the Irish in South Boston. Intimidation and internal pressures were brought on those who would not conform to the convention of enclave. The political machine of the Irish was possible because of the solid base of commonality in the enclave, but ward bosses rules with both gentle smiles and irons fists to control the power and direction of the enclave (O'Connor 1988). The enclave repelled any encroachment on its geography and was as bigoted towards new groups as the Brahmins were towards the Irish in the early years of their immigration.

John Collins was elected Mayor in 1960 and re-elected in 1968. He pushed the concept of "New Boston", the working towards urban renewal and growth (O'Connor 1995). Under Collins, city government created the Boston Redevelopment Authority (BRA), which began working on "General Neighborhood Renewal Plans" to combat the growing disrepair in the city. The BRA wanted to create a special district in South Boston to promote industrial growth, but the neighborhood united against this plan, accusing it of destroying the character of the peninsula (O'Connor 1988). The community won another battle against a project that threatened the community in 1976, when placement of the Worlds Fair in Columbia Point would have displaced more than 25,000 families. The residents continued to protest against the encroachment of industry, business

and other residential development. In defense of the community, they created the South Boston Community Development Corporation (SBCDC) to help rehabilitate local tenements, to develop local businesses, and to bring more economic opportunities into the area.

As the community battled the city to maintain its character, there was an ever-present ‘threat’ of non-Irish Catholic residents moving into the community. An undertone to renewal was an increase in racial tensions. There is a growing presence of Afro-Americans in Boston, and isolated ethnocentric neighborhoods did not welcome the change. There were strict unwritten codes in the neighborhoods, and the codes were defined by the ethnic residents -- white ethnic residents. The civil rights movements of the 1950’s and 1960’s brought minority rights to the forefront, but working class residents of the ethnic neighborhoods resisted the change in social hierarchy. Racial tension came to a head when the desegregation or ‘busing’ issue hit Boston. In August of 1965, the state passed the Racial Imbalance Act, in which any school that was more than 50 percent black was considered segregated. To gain racial equality, from around Boston students would be bussed to schools in other parts of the city, or even from outside suburbs to the city to gain “balance”. In the majority white enclave of South Boston, students were slated to be shipped across the city while local schools received black students from Boston city. The citizens of South Boston felt they were being forced to change and risked losing the safety and homogeneity of their enclave.

The issue of bussing was a top priority in the mayoral election of 1967 between Louise Day Hicks and Kevin Hagan White. Hicks who was “fighting for the working class” was a vocal opponent to busing and was Boston’s first female candidate for mayor (O’Connor 1995). She gained much of her support from the ethnic neighborhoods of Boston. Hicks would lose the election to White, but she would keep her political voice on the overwhelmingly Irish Catholic, white school committee. The school committee fought hard against the desegregation regulations, with Hicks being one of the most vocal. Hicks created ROAR (Restore Our Alienated Rights) reflecting the Irish enclave’s mentality of associating with ones ‘ own kind’ (O’Connor 1995). Desegregation was chipping away at neighborhood schools and children associating with “their own kind”.

In the 1972 *Morgan v. Hennigan* case, by Judge W. Arthur Garrity Jr., ruled that over 18,000 students would be bussed to achieve desegregation (O’Connor 1995). On September 12, 1974, busing began with a backdrop of violent protest and extreme discontent. Racial conflict marred the city and the people of South Boston felt betrayed by politicians, the state and the bureaucracy as they watched their children bused to school. South Boston was not going to lie down and take the forced busing. The enclave looked back on its success at keeping out the Worlds Fair, an amusement park, BRA renewal plans, and industrial encroachment and was prepared to continue the fight to maintain what had been built over the last one hundred years.

The bussing conflict can be viewed as an ugly event in the history of the enclave. The residents battled with hatred to ensure integration did not occur. Just as Irish had been discriminated against in their earlier years of settlement in United States, they too resisted accepting new people into their internal system. Yet, there was a positive to all of this upheaval. The Irish Catholic community was brought together. Rallying against the busing decision had a unifying effect. The people of South Boston fought to maintain what they had built on the peninsula.

They loved their community; they loved it the way it was and had always been. They refused to have it changed by outsiders who looked upon their morals as medieval and who regarded their lifestyles as barbaric. They might well go down – but they would go down fighting! That was the South Boston way (O'Connor 1988, 230).

In 1975, White was re-elected Mayor, but he was plagued by fiscal and social battles throughout his tenure. The next mayor of Boston would have to solve the racial tensions and economic upheaval. Ray Flynn was inaugurated as mayor on January 2, 1984. He brought back, at least on some level, the age of ethnic politics and community activism. Flynn was a home town South Boston boy who went to South Boston High and Providence College and was known to still play basketball on the local school grounds, even after being elected into office (O'Connor 1995). His politics appealed to the working class throughout the city. He carefully walked both sides of the racial fence, promoting non-violence and being focused on the neighborhoods. Flynn took to changing and reviving the city by making the streets safer, calming racial conflicts, and promoting positive development. The busing conflict was eased with the installation of the first Afro-

American superintendent, Dr. Laval Wilson on September 3, 1985. He successfully integrated public housing in his second term by using his knowledge of the South Boston community to help guide it through the process, and had a culturally sensitive understanding of how the neighborhood would react.

In 1993, Flynn was appointed ambassador to the Vatican, and handed the Mayor's office over to Thomas Menino, Boston's first Italian-American mayor. Some questioned if this loss of power was the end of Irish political reign. The changing demographics of the city, with the white population of Boston below 60 percent, put Irish Catholic ethnic voting in jeopardy of being overshadowed by other more dominant groups. Yet, there is still voting strength in the Irish working class populations that reside in South Boston, East Boston and Charlestown (O'Connor 1995). The demographics of the city are changing, but some groups are still not interested in the thankless job of politics, and this void is where the Irish political machine still moves voters to the polls and candidates to the forefront. The new faces of Boston, those immigrants from Latin America and other places, are not fully established in the city, and the older members of the rooted ethnic communities still influence the affairs of City Hall (O'Connor 1995).

Today, Boston is a product of its immigrants, from the Protestant Brahmins to the current South East Asians immigrants who have passed through her port. The Irish enclave of South Boston is a product of historical actions with three defining events initial immigration, the rise of Irish politics and protests of

desegregation bussing. These three events are landmarks where the Irish secured their social and physical position on the peninsula and defined themselves as different from the host community. The early settlement and rooting of the enclave in South Boston resulted from the need of the Irish to create a safe place to themselves. The rise of Irish politics allowed the enclave to have influence on city policies that could harm the ethnic neighborhood and produced successful politicians through the power of ethnic voting. The enclave gained power in the city of Boston as a whole through mayoral candidates and other politicians in and City Hall and other departments. In the most recent landmark event of desegregation bussing protests, the enclave violently argued to resist change in the neighborhood. The enclave united under a common cause to battle a policy that could dramatically change the social landscape of enclave. As the Brahmin culture had done Irish immigrants during the 1800's, South Boston from the 1960's was enraged at the thought of a minority group infiltrating their social system.

<u>1820 to 1875</u>	<u>Civil War</u>	<u>WWI</u>	<u>WWII</u>	<u>Late 1960's</u>	<u>1980's</u>
Mass Immigration			Growth of Irish political machine Ethnic Voting		Battle against bussing

Table C: Timeline of Irish in South Boston

These three major events are pivotal in the history of South Boston and define the character of the enclave during changes in function. These events are part of the culture of the enclave and are embedded in its memory as residents struggled to create a place where they could promote local candidates, go to church on Sunday,

have a Guinness at the local pub and rally proudly under the banner of the tri-color and red, white and blue. “In their prolonged struggle for survival and achievement, they did turn Boston into an ‘Irish’ city” (O’Connor 1995, 303).

CHAPTER IV– THE CULTURE OF THE ENCLAVE

During the late 1800's and early 1900's, the United States opened itself to immigrants who would fill the cities and settlements that were spreading westward into the American frontier. Yet, the Irish stayed in Boston against harsh sentiments from the Brahmin society. The Irish remained in Boston rather than uprooting again and move away from the familiar people and safety of a growing neighborhood. By staying in South Boston, they built security in numbers and could continue their beloved Celtic traditions (O'Connor 1988). Much of the enclave's sense of community is based on mutual faith placed in morals, norms and customs brought from the Emerald Isle and passed on across generations. Irish culture has deep roots in its religion, Celtic customs and common social practices. "Networks of social relations within an ethnic community serve as a pervasive mechanism of support and control" (Ajrouch 2000, 457). These common bonds were the glue of the enclave and an integral part of the continued functions of the enclave.

Understanding the culture of the enclave is essential to viewing the change in functions because the reactions of an enclave are influenced by the embedded cultural customs and history of the people. The culture of the enclave has changed over time, but there are core elements in the social and religious practices that have endured time and are the backbone of the enclave. This cultural examination of Irish Catholics is essential to understanding the functions of an enclave in a

historical perspective because an ethnic neighborhood is a product of both the ethnicity and historical events that punctuated the lives of the Irish.

The customs and values of the Irish were part of the growth of the enclave. The three major historical events identified earlier as immigration, political rise to power including ethnic voting and the battles of desegregation were infused with the culture and history of the Irish. Irish emigrants arrived attached to their Catholic faith that had been persecuted in Ireland during English oppression and clung to the church as a common bond. The effectiveness and drive of ethnic voting was secure because of the social networks established in the enclave and clan-like mentality of the working class neighborhood. The clan attitude also defined who belonged is the battle to keep the neighborhood homogenous during times of encroachment and change in the enclave.

Those who have lived in the enclave and grew up in Celtic culture understand its nuances and inner workings. Billy McGee, an architect, is an Irish Catholic who grew up in South Boston and has first-hand knowledge of the internal mechanisms and culture of the enclave. Dr. Leo Carroll, a professor at the University of Rhode Island, is of Irish Catholic descent and with family in South Boston. Carroll grew up experiencing the culture of his ethnicity and struggling to fit within the confines of its structure. Robert Bryson, an aquaculturelist, also lived within the distinct cultural climate of the Irish Catholics and worked in South Boston. These three informants were used to gain street level knowledge of the

culture of the Irish Catholics and to gain a deeper understanding of the enclave and the functions that evolved within South Boston's history. It is difficult to penetrate the inner workings of the enclave and the cultural nuances of the Irish if there is not an already established connection to the area.

1. Religion

The Catholic Church is an integral part of the Irish culture and "was the center of the community" (McGee 2003). Rarely does one hear the term Irish, without the term Catholic following. They have become synonymous with each other because of the absolute integration of the two cultures. South Boston residents identified themselves by their parish as much as they did with Irish clan or county (O'Connor 1995). The clergy are the leaders of the community and are revered along with politicians and influential residents. It is not uncommon to see local leaders, infamous residents and devout citizens attend the same daily 7:00am mass at St. Augustine's (McGee 2003). There is sense of unity and equality for all in the church. Upon settling the peninsula, the Irish began to build Catholic churches, and soon Boston's Protestant majority became the minority in South Boston. The cradle-to-grave association with the church runs the functions of the enclave (O'Connor 1988).

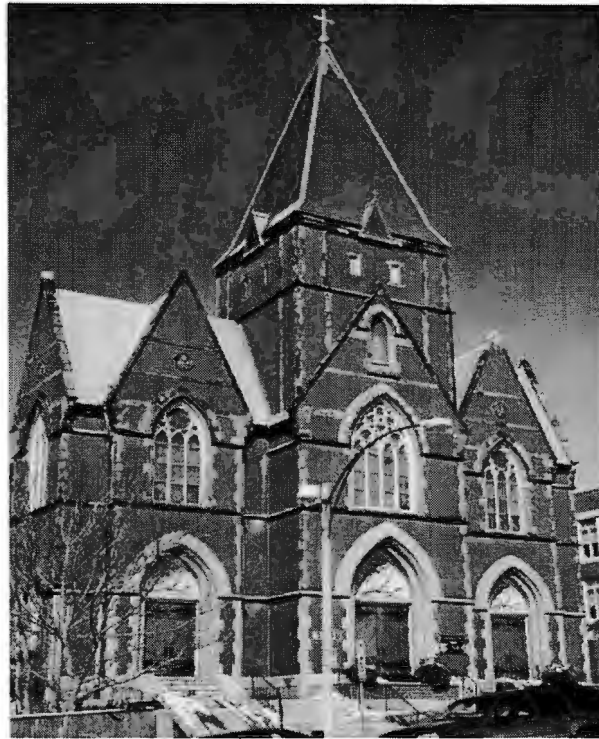


Figure G: St. Augustine's Church

There is a lot of ethnocentrism in the Irish Catholic community after its battles to break through the Protestant majority. Catholics resented those Protestants in power who had robbed them socially and economically in Ireland and had been bigoted towards them as immigrants in the United States. These anti-Brahmin, anti-Protestant views combined with the strict social rules of the Catholic faith hidden behind the façade of lace curtains (Carroll 2003). Many Irish Protestants were second-class citizens in their own community. Marrying a Protestant or anyone outside the faith was unacceptable. A new generation of Southie kids was being educated and rising socially and economically. This social “code” alienated some of the new generation of Southie residents, and they would move up and out of the tight-knit community standards. Still, many stayed and

continued traditions marrying the “good Catholic boy or girl” of the neighborhood. The Irish Catholic faith and code continues in these individuals both inside and outside the enclave. The walls of the enclave protected the faith and continued,

the people’s strong sense of ethnicity reinforced their devotional practices, and their religious beliefs infused the traditional pride of their national spirit (O’Connor 1988, 82).

2. Drinking

Among other customs, the Irish emigrants brought their drinking habits across the Atlantic with them. From whiskey to Guinness, drinking and pubs are an integral part of Irish culture. Drinking was not always viewed as a positive trait among the Irish. Drunkenness and bar brawls added fuel to the already existing abhorrence the host community had for the poor Irish Catholic immigrants. The Catholic Church preached against the indulgence and was aware of the reputation that the Irish were receiving for their rowdy, intoxicated behavior. The church saw alcohol as an obstacle to acceptance into the Protestant majority (O’Connor 1988). Nevertheless, to the Irish, drinking was a social event and the bar room a place where the poorest immigrant was an equal. The church preached temperance, but the bar was a gathering place for men and as much part of the social life of the enclave as the church.

Unemployment and poverty left few men with options other than drinking their days away. The saloon was ‘the poor man’s club’, a transfer of the familiar pub that had always played such an important role in Irish country life (O’Connor 1988). The bars were social centers of neighborhoods, meetings houses, places to

hear stories from the old country, and were safe, comfortable places. Grog shops and bar rooms became a place where politicians recruited votes and made connections.

Bartenders handed out applications forms for naturalization, provided free legal advice, and loaned money to those in need. In the new world, emigrants found that alcohol was an acceptable, universal and almost essential part of their social and political environment (O'Connor 1988, 44).



Figure H: Local Irish bars are still places of gathering

3. Social customs and nuances

The ethnic enclave has invisible walls to guard. In South Boston, young people marked their turf and separatism was an unwritten law of the neighborhood (O'Connor 1988). "We banded together for protection and safety...it's how I got my paper route done," said Billy McGee. "Gangs of youths were part of the community fabric, they went to school together, went to church together and had commonality in culture". "The neighborhood was a place of comfort and protection," says McGee. "It was clear who lived there, and who didn't belong," remembered Robert Bryson who worked in South Boston as a youth. The residents drew clear lines of community and battled to ensure the continuation of the neighborhood. The gang-like mentality as protection against change and infiltration by other groups was violently acted out in the protest riots against public housing on the fringes of South Boston and the busing of students in the late 1970's and early 1980's.

There is a "cloak of secrecy" (Carroll 2003) over the enclave and among Irish Catholics in general. "You just don't talk about certain things," explained Leo Carroll in an interview about his Irish Catholic heritage. "It is embedded in the culture to not talk about certain things" and family and community enforced this unwritten code of silence (Bryson 2003). The cloak of secrecy is a feeling or 'thing' that is not easily explained to outsiders. There is no clear definition of where and how the custom of secrecy was learned by the community and in the church, but it is clear there is a code of behavior that residents followed. "There

are unspoken rules of conduct and silence in the neighborhood,” stated Bryson. “In South Boston you learned silence and loyalty”. This code or loyalty was another layer in the bonding of residents and the enclave.

The community has changed over time, but “it is an ethnic neighborhood, less so today, but you can’t plan a community like that” (McGee 2003). The neighborhood rallies behind its common history, common struggles the Irish people have endured on both sides of the Atlantic, and the social fabric of the place. “There was cultural attachment, a sense of comfort and a level of protection in being in the neighborhood” (McGee 2003). Some people moved out of the three-decker homes of a “working class” neighborhood. “The area is viewed as a working class neighborhood, is still cloaked in the secrecy of the Catholic faith, and some people just cannot live within those confines” (Carroll 2003). It is unclear if this phenomenon of secrecy is present throughout the Catholic faith in association with other ethnicities. “Some kids did move out into the suburbs, but, today there is still a sense of community, a better up keep in the neighborhood and people live a better life in general throughout South Boston” (McGee 2003).



Figure I: Residential streets are still lined by three-deckers.

The Irish have expanded beyond the limits of the peninsula but hold South Boston as common cultural ground. South Boston is clearly associated with Celtic culture through Irish newspapers, Catholic parishes and Irish culture clubs based in the area. Websites, tourism guides, and general perception paint the area as ‘Irish’ or an Irish-American neighborhood. The Irish have shed some of their negative stigma from the past. Today, many proudly support their Irish heritage, and the City of Boston has capitalized on this with marketing and tourism celebrating the Irish of Boston. Visiting South Boston, a person still views signs of Irish culture. Spires of the long built Catholic churches rise through the peninsula, three – deckers with the Tri-color hung out front, Irish pubs cater to Celtic palettes with Guinness and Harp, Gaelic language is along side English on signs and the symbol of the shamrock abounds. The relationship of the Irish with South Boston will not soon be diminished, with the number of ancestral Irish residents still living there in heavy density and the historical significance of the Irish in South Boston. Those of Irish ancestry still dominate Massachusetts and Boston with almost 23 percent in 2000 (United States Census 2000). The enclave has not been penetrated by another ethnicity. South Boston still has the highest number of ancestral Irish in the city of Boston. There is an unexplained drop from 1990 to 2000 in percent White in South Boston, but it is still a predominately white, Irish neighborhood compared to Boston as a whole (United States Census 2000).

The Irish are the highest reported ancestry (besides other) in Massachusetts and Boston

Massachusetts: 1,428,472 (22.5%)

Boston: 93,360 (15.8%)

Table D: Facts about Irish in Massachusetts (United States Census, 2000)

South Boston	1950	1970	1990	2000
Percentage White	98%	98%	95.5%	84.5%
Percentage Black	Less than .5%	Less than 1%	.9%	2.5%
South Boston	1950	1970	1990	2000
Ancestry –Irish	3267	5178	12,977	11,503

Table E: South Boston ancestry and race information (United States Census 1950,1970, 1990 and 2000)



Figure J: Plaque at the Irish Famine Memorial in Boston, Massachusetts

CHAPTER V- WHY FUNCTIONS SHOULD BE VIEWED HISTORICALLY

Functions are related to needs and are part of the general sociology of an enclave and its residents. Events inside and outside of an enclave affect functions and the functions of an enclave change and react with cultural and historical uniqueness. “Ethnicity is not simply an ascribed category; it is an identity rooted in distinctive patterns of social relationships” (Zhou & Bankston 1998, 230). It is impossible to understand an enclave’s functions without recognizing the social climate and historical events that influenced to the ethnic residents, collective identity and social relationships. Enclaves are heavily influenced by who lives there, their social customs and the host environments in which the enclaves evolve. Boston’s Irish enclave changed its mode of operation events affected the enclave. The functions of the enclave are actions that fulfill its needs in some sense, but needs do not generate functional patterns automatically.

1. Functions as part of historical events

For example, defensive functions are a reaction to a need for security during the establishment of the neighborhood and at times when the cohesion of the enclave is threatened. During the mid-to-late 1800’s, there was a large influx of immigrants to Boston. Among this mass of immigrants was a large contingent of Irish fleeing the potato famine and English oppression. This dramatic change in demographics produced negative sentiment towards non-natives and distinct anti-Irish sentiment because of the differences in culture and economics these immigrants brought with them into an established social system on the Boston

Protestant Brahmins. This anti-immigrant environment increased unemployment because of anti-Irish hiring practices, in turn creating a poverty-stricken enclave. The Catholic religion of the Irish was alien in the dominant Protestant host community. Anti-immigrant movements, such as the Know-Nothing Party movement, harassment of Catholic sacrament, and roving gangs fueled by the wave of poor immigrants invading the city produced a need for security and safety among Irish immigrants. The Irish came under attack because they did not conform to norms and society of the Brahmin ruling class.

The defensive function of the enclave was employed because of alienation and assault the Irish were enduring in discriminatory hiring, religious persecution and physical violence. The neighborhood began to construct walls of defense and to define the peninsula as a neighborhood of Irish Catholics. The peninsula's geography was a physical aid in defining the 'walls' of the neighborhood and added another layer of security for the enclave during the anti-immigrant environment of the mid to late 1800's. The area was reinforced by chain migration. This successful defense created a safe haven for immigrants and was a shield against tension with the host community.

Part of the defensive function is the avoidance of external contact and the increase of internal supportive actions. The external negative pressures forced the residents to produce internal aid and to avoid any additional interaction with the host community. The enclave developed a sense of unity and identity partly

because of the external harsh atmosphere that the ruling citizens imposed. The inward focus of avoidance supported the safety in numbers, homogeneous, and clan like networking of an enclave. The Irish could not depend on the host community to assist them in assimilation while still sustaining a high level of ancestral culture. The social niche of South Boston was a safe place for immigrants to arrive, and continue the celebration of Celtic culture.

The Civil War changed interactions with the host community with more employment opportunities opened to Irish workers and an overall change social climate. The Irish were slowly breaking down barriers, and had firm roots growing on the peninsula. The majority of immigrants arriving during this time were more “foreign” (mainly Eastern Europe and Russia) to the host community because they did not speak English and were of numerous faiths. They soon replaced the Irish in the bottom rung of Boston’s hierarchical society. As the faces of the immigrants changed, the overall demographics of Boston shifted and the enclave took on a more defensive role, protecting itself from invasion by other immigrant groups. A clear line of who ‘belonged’ in the enclave was drawn. In addition, during this time, the internal pressure of the preservation functions hardened. With the lessening of Irish immigration and the increase of “foreigners”, the Irish neighborhood had to maintain a higher level of cultural integrity. The Irish knew what it was like to lose their land and customs under the rule of the English, and the culture of solidarity would not let them relinquish it again. The specific culture

and history of the Irish made them gun shy of the risk of losing their land and culture because another group encroached upon them.

The attack function of the enclave came into play with the creation of ethnic politicians and the Irish political machine. The neighborhood was an opportune place to use the “ethnic vote” to advance the intent of residents and the career politician. It changed the overall direction of Boston. This “attack” function was put into motion when renewal in the 1960’s and the busing of the children in the early 1980’s threatened the neighborhood homogeneity and culture. With renewal, the neighborhood saw a threat over 25,000 locals being displaced with the Worlds Fair at Columbia Point and an increase in housing. To combat this political threat, the residents created the South Boston Community Development Corporation (SBCDC) to rehabilitate the area.

The most visible attack function was put into action during the anti-desegregation movement, starting in 1974 with the Morgan v. Hennigan case. The residents feared that their children would be schooled outside the safety and solidarity of the neighborhood. They also rallied against the bussing in of non-white students into the over 95 percent white community. The enclave utilized local politicians such as Louise Day Hicks and her vocal Restore Our Alienated Rights (ROAR) group to rally against the desegregation decision. The enclave was a safe area to for supporting the anti-segregation movement, and the enclave could attack with its homogeneous constituency.

Today the enclave is still reacting to elements that surround the peninsula. The neighborhood is experiencing revitalization and some level of gentrification because of the skyrocketing land prices and housing prices in the city of Boston. Yet, the enclave is still present in this fickle urban geography. The battle to establish the enclave and to ensure its preservation over the last century is engrained in the peninsula. The functions of the enclave are still part of the neighborhood and are flexible enough to react to current events. The Irish Catholics have had a tormented history, and this created a deep affection to clan and culture that is acted out in the functions of defense and preservation of the enclave of South Boston.

CHAPTER V – CONCLUSION

Enclaves are a product of the ethnic experiences. An ethnic enclave should not be analyzed the same as a non-homogeneous neighborhood because cultural and social properties influence how the enclave operates. Functions of the ethnic Irish enclave of South Boston are heavily influenced by the culture of the Irish and historical events. The Irish emigrated because of domination by Protestant English rule and experienced similar harsh treatment by the Boston Brahmins in the early years of their arrival. The Irish arrived in Boston embattled, and the anti-immigrant environment created a need for a defensive wall of safety as part of establishing a place of their own. The attack function of ethnic voting could not have occurred if there was not a base because of the intense tribe-like bond of the Irish. The defensive function was again enacted when the enclave was at risk of losing the neighborhood because of desegregation. The enclave reacted communally to ensure that customs and land were not displaced by changes in greater Boston. The Irish have a history of oppression and displacement and react with instinct and remembrance of those events. The clan mentality of Irish culture continued in Boston and was a platform for attack using ethnic voting. There is a powerful connection between place and culture acted out in the functions of the enclave.

The preservation function of South Boston is entwined in the community with defensive and attack functions because the enclave is constantly in the minority in the host city. The Irish were persecuted both in Ireland (under English

rule) and Boston because of their culture, yet it was the dedication to culture that is the glue of the neighborhood. Preservation of culture was the backbone of defensive and attack functions as the Irish of South Boston created the enclave on the peninsula.

As changing demographics encroached upon the enclave, it battled to maintain its identity and existence. The needs of enclaves produce defense and avoidance to sustain a place in urban areas where culture is not lost and ethnic groups maintain a defined ownership of a neighborhood. It is important to recognize the uniqueness and functions of enclaves because they are part of the cycles and sociology of cities and immigrant populations.

Enclaves should be celebrated for their uniqueness and not forced into absolute assimilation because they contribute quality of metropolitan life with their preservation of ethnic culture. Ethnic enclaves are parts of colorful mosaics of urban geography and in the future should be better acknowledged for their historical and cultural contributions to cities. When dealing with an enclave city government and officials must recognize that enclaves react with a sense of history, culture and more cohesion than those areas that have diverse residents. Enclaves battle with unity because the neighborhood is not broken by such factors as race, religion or culture, unlike neighborhoods that do not have commonality of heritage and custom. Government officials and city planners can have policies that

are more effective by understanding that enclaves differ from general neighborhood because of the cultures and histories of enclaves.

The Irish neighborhood of South Boston will not soon be engulfed by the melting pot of a metropolis. The neighborhood still battles to keep its homogeneous identity, and still maintains the highest number of white Irish Catholics in Boston. Unlike the past, today the city celebrates its Celtic influences with museums, heritage trails and tourism marketing. The enclave is a draw for those looking to experience the richness of Irish culture, and the area is capitalizing on this success. The multi-layered bond to neighborhood, faith and culture is not lost in the change of building facades and modernization of South Boston. There are ever present connections in the area because of the bonds of ethnicity and the physical and social lines that establish who belongs.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX A - Consent Form

Approved by IRB of URI

**University of Rhode Island
Community Planning and Landscape Architecture
Rodman Hall Kingston, RI 02882
Functions of Urban Ethnic Enclaves in Urban Areas**

CONSENT FORM FOR RESEARCH

You have been asked to take part in a research project described below. The researcher will explain the project; feel free to ask questions if at any point you do not understand a concept. If you have any questions, please contact Emaly Bryson at Eabryson@yahoo.com or by phone at 508-789-6195.

This study will ask you about your thoughts, feelings and experience of dealing with, or being a citizen of South Boston, Massachusetts. As an ethnic enclave * this area is associated with Irish Catholic culture and traditions. How this enclave evolved over time and the functions that occur within an enclave is of interest to this study. If you decide to take part in this study, you will be interviewed via phone or in person about the above stated topic. The interview will take about 45 minutes. There is little to no risk or discomfort on the part of you, the subject, during the interview process. You will NOT be tape-recorded.

Your interviews will help this thesis gain a better internal and external analysis of actions and sociology of the enclave. In addition, it is important to have personal understanding of the culture of ethnic Irish Catholics as to better empathize with the actions and functions of the enclave.

This study is not confidential; your full names will be cited in the thesis, along with quotes. All records of the interview will be maintained by the project investigator (Emaly Bryson). A copy of your statements to be used will be submitted to you for prior approval.

If at any time you wish to remove you information from this thesis, or not continue with the interview process, you are free to do so at any time. You will not be penalized for decisions to stop the process. If you wish to quit, please inform Emaly Bryson at Eabryson@yahoo.com or 508-789-6195. Or, if at any time you feel this process is unjust or you are not satisfied with its procedures, please discuss your complaints with Marshall Feldman at Marsh@uri.edu or 401-874-5983 or direct them to Vice Provost for Graduate Studies, Research&Outreach 70 Lower College Road, Suite 2, URI, Kingston, RI 02882 or 401-874-4328.

You have read this consent form; your questions have been answered. Your signature below therefore means that you understand and agree with the above information and willingly participate in this study.

_____ Participant Date_____

_____ Researcher Date_____

* Ethnic enclave- is a spatially concentrated area in which members of a particular population group, self-defined by ethnicity or religion or otherwise live in the same geographical area. Also associated with the word community or neighborhood that is aligned with an ethnic group, for example an Asian or Jewish neighborhood.

APPENDIX B - Glossary of Terms

Ancestry - Refers to a person's self-identification of heritage, ethnic origin, descent, or close identification to an ethnic group (United States Census, 2000).

Brahmin - Originally used to describing the highest caste in ancient societies in India, it was coined to explain the elite, ruling class of Bostonian. The Brahmins became the host society for the Irish immigrants.

Ethnic enclave- Is a spatially concentrated area in which members of a particular population group, self-defined by ethnicity or religion or otherwise, congregate as a means of enhancing their economic, social, political, and/or cultural development (Marcuse, 1997). Also related to the words or phrases of community, ethnic community, and ethnic neighborhood.

Ethnicity - Reflects the cultural experiences and feelings of a particular group that may have a) a real or supposed common ancestry, b) memories of a shared historical past, c) a distinctive shared culture, d) a collective name or e) a sense of solidarity and an association with a specific territory (Nikora, 1995).

Host/ Host community – The dominant culture, society or urban group in which the enclave exist.

Southie - A slang or local term for South Boston, applied to both the location and residents.

Tri-color – Common name used to refer to the flag of Ireland and its three colors, green, white and gold/orange.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Ajrouch, Kristine J. "Place, Age, and Culture: Community living and ethnic identity among Lebanese American adolescents" Small Group Research. (August 2000): 447-470.
- Abrahamson, Mark. Urban Enclaves. New York: St. Martin's Press, 1996.
- Boal, F.W, "Ethnic Residential Segregation" In Spatial Process and Form of Social Areas in Cities, edited by Herbert D.T. and Johnston, R.J.: Wiley, 1976.
- "Boston Irish Peoples – The Soul of the City" The World of Hibernia. (2000).
- Boston Redevelopment Authority, Neighborhood Profile/Census 2000
http://www.ci.boston.ma.us/bra/PDF/Publications//pdr_554.pdf [March, 2003]
- Bryson, Robert. Bryson Sea Farms, West Barnstable, Massachusetts. Interview, March 2003.
- Carroll, Leo. University of Rhode Island Kingston, Rhode Island. Interview, February 2003.
- Dolan, Jay P. "Anti-Irish Racism in the United States" University of Notre Dame
<http://migration.ucc.ie/conferences%20and%20publications/conferences/scattering/conferencepapers/Prof.%20Jay%20P.%20Dolan.htm> 1997 [March, 2003]
- Forry, Bill. "Boston – the capital of Irish America," The World of Hibernia
<http://www.twoh.com/spring2000/boston.cfm> [November 2001].
- Gans, Herbert. "Comment: Ethnic invention and acculturation, a bumpy-line approach" Journal of American Ethnic History (Fall 1992): 42-53.
- Goodwin, Amy. Boston Redevelopment Authority, Boston, Massachusetts. Personal Communication, March 2003.
- Handlin, Oscar. Boston's immigrants: a study in acculturation. Cambridge: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1941.
- "Irish Immigration" <http://www.assumption.edu/ahc/Irish/overview.html> [March, 2003]

- Johnston, Mary. "Irish Emigration"
<http://www.gober.net/victorian/reports/irish2.htm> [November 2001].
- "Map of Boston" <http://www.state.ma.us/dph/beha/images/south.gif> [March 2003]
- "Map of Irish Counties"
http://server.totalnetnh.net/~dmurray/map_of_the_counties_of_ireland.htm
 [March 2003]
- Marcuse, Peter "The Ghetto of Exclusion and the Fortified Enclave". American Behavioral Scientist. (Nov/Dec1997): 311-327.
- Marcuse, Peter. "The Enclave, The Citadel, and The Ghetto" Urban Affairs Review. (November 1997): 228 –265.
- McGee, Bill. Architect, Weymouth, Massachusetts. Interview, February 2003.
- Nikora Linda Waimarie."Race, Culture and Ethnicity: Organization of Maori social groups - A working paper": Psychology Department, University of Waikato, Hamilton, (1995)
- O'Connor, Thomas H. South Boston, my hometown: the history of an ethnic neighborhood. Boston: Quinlan Press, 1998.
- O'Connor, Thomas H. The Boston Irish. Boston: Northeastern University Press, 1995
- Peach, Ceri. "The Meaning of Segregation." Planning Practice & Research 11 (2) (May 1996): 137-151.
- Sze-Onn, Yee. "Ethnic Enclaves as Teach and Learning Sites". Social Studies (Jan/Feb 1996): 3-18.
- United States Census. United States Census of Population by Tract
 VIII Table-1, (1950)
- United States Census. United States Census of Population and Housing -
 Census Tracts, Boston MA Table P-2, (1970)

United States Census. (1990) Summary tables
http://factfinder.census.gov/servlet/DTable?_ts=65963427312 [March,2003]

United States Census. (2000).Glossary
http://landview.census.gov/dmd/www/glossary/glossary_a.html#ancestry
[January, 2003].

Van Kempen, Ronald; Ozuekren, Sule. "Ethnic Segregation in Cities: new forms and explanations in a dynamic world" Urban Studies (October, 1998): 1631-1657.

Zhou M & Bankston C. Growing up American: How Vietnamese children adapt to life in the United State. New York: Russell Sage, 1998.